

The M-346's fly-by-wire control system can be configured to simulate the handling of different types of aircraft.



ALENIA AERMACCHI

## M-346 jet trainer nears Mach 1 with software

The Alenia Aermacchi M-346 Italian-built jet trainer has reached near-supersonic speeds in its flight test program.

Prototype aircraft No. 2 performed three flights of about one hour each and reached a speed of Mach 0.96. A new release of flight-control software allowed the flight-test envelope to be ex-

panded, the company said. Before the new software was installed, the aircraft had reached Mach 0.85.

The M-346 is being developed for increasingly competitive markets worldwide where air forces are either replacing aging jet trainer fleets or looking to introduce a jet into their flying

training programs. The BAE Systems Hawk Advanced Jet Trainer and the KAI T-50 Golden Eagle, based on the Lockheed Martin F-16 airframe, are among competitors. Aermacchi, a Finmeccanica company, is pitching the M-346 for the Eurotraining program, an initiative to develop a common trainer for 10 European air forces.

Aermacchi said the flight-test program will pick up pace this year, leading to clearance of the full flight envelope. The first pre-production aircraft will fly in late 2007.

## Cubic to supply small-arms trainers to U.S. Army

The U.S. Army Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation has awarded Cubic Corp. a \$24.2 million contract to supply its Engagement Skills Trainer 2000 (EST 2000) and other defense training systems.

Under the award, Cubic's Simulation Systems Division in Orlando, Fla., will manufacture the small-arms training systems including the EST 2000, which teaches marksmanship skills, squad-level collective defense and judgmental "shoot-don't shoot" tactics. The system teaches soldiers at the U.S. Army Infantry School how to use small arms, as well as the .50-caliber M2 machine gun and the 40mm Mark-19 grenade launcher.

The Warrior Skills version of EST 2000 will allow mounted or dismounted soldiers to engage en-



CUBIC

emy targets as they move through a virtual urban environment that replicates current combat conditions and includes simulated improvised explosive devices.

Cubic has fielded more than 800 EST 2000s to military installations around the world.

The contract also calls for Cu-

bic to produce driver components for the LAV 25 Advanced Gunnery Training System as a subcontractor to Lockheed Martin, prime contractor for the virtual trainer, which is used by the U.S. Marine Corps for combat gunnery training for light armored vehicle crews.

## U.S., German navies order P-3C trainers

The U.S. Navy has awarded L-3 Link Simulation and Training a contract to provide a P-3C Orion maritime surveillance aircraft Forward Deployed Trainer (FDT).

The Navy may procure up to nine additional FDTs, Link said.

The P-3C FDT supports immersive training at three of the aircraft's acoustic and non-acoustic sensor operator consoles.

The trainer is modular, allowing consoles to be flexibly arranged to operate within the small footprint requirements found at austere overseas operations. A PC-based instructor operator station enables the designated instructor to control the training exercise.

The initial P-3C FDT will be delivered to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla., and is planned to reach ready-for-training status in March 2008. The last contract option is scheduled to be exercised by the Navy during the latter part of 2008.

In a separate deal involving P-3C trainers, CAE was awarded a contract to develop a P-3C Orion operational tactics trainer (OTT) for the German Navy.

The contract, valued at about \$28 million, calls for CAE to design, manufacture and maintain a new OTT to train the rear-crew sensor operators in the Orion. The OTT will be networked with the aircraft's operational flight trainer, which CAE is upgrading.

The P-3C OTT is scheduled for delivery to the German Navy air wing in Nordholz in fall 2008. CAE's P-3C OTT program team includes Lockheed Martin and EADS.

The German Navy acquired eight P-3C aircraft and a P-3C operational flight trainer from the Royal Netherlands Navy in 2005. As part of the navy's P-3C Capability Upkeep Program, CAE was awarded a contract in 2005 to upgrade the Orion's flight trainer. CAE has already relocated the operational flight trainer to its facility in Stohlberg, Germany.